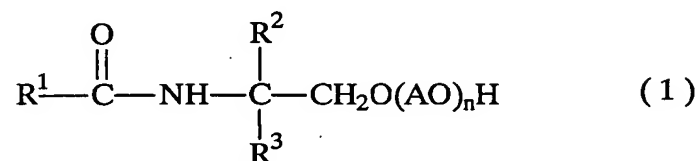


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A thickener comprising a fatty acid alkanolamide represented by ~~the general~~ formula (1):



wherein R¹ represents a straight-chain or branched alkyl or alkenyl group, having 5 to 21 carbon atoms, which may be substituted with at least one hydroxyl group, R² and R³ independently represent an alkyl group having 1 to 2 carbon atoms, AO represents an oxyalkylene group having 2 to 4 carbon atoms and n denotes a number of 0 to 10 in average.

Claim 2 (Original): The thickener according to Claim 1, wherein R² and R³ represent a methyl group.

Claim 3 (Original): A surfactant composition comprising the thickener as claimed in Claim 1 or 2 and at least one surfactant.

Claim 4 (Original): The surfactant composition according to Claim 3, wherein the surfactant is an anionic surfactant.

Claim 5 (Cancelled).

Claim 6 (Original): A method of thickening a surfactant, which comprises mixing a fatty acid alkanolamide as defined in Claim 1 or 2 with the surfactant.

Claim 7 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the radical R^1 represents a straight-chain or branched alkyl or alkenyl group, having 7 to 17 carbon atoms, which may be substituted with at least one hydroxyl group.

Claim 8 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fatty acyl radical, R^1CO- , is obtained from a fatty acid which is selected from the group consisting of caprylic acid, capric acid, lauric acid, myristic acid, palmitic acid, stearic acid, oleic acid, ricinoleic acid, 12-hydroxystearic acid, isostearic acid, and mixtures thereof.

Claim 9 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fatty acyl radical, R^1CO- , is obtained from lauric acid.

Claim 10 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fatty acyl radical, R^1CO- , is obtained from coconut oil.

Claim 11 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the fatty acyl radical, R^1CO- , is obtained from palm kernel oil.

Claim 12 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein R^2 and R^3 are both methyl radicals.

Claim 13 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein AO is an oxoethylene.

Claim 14 (New): The thickener as claimed in Claim 1, wherein n denotes a number of 0 to 5 in average.

DISCUSSION OF THE AMENDMENT

Claim 1 is amended, in order to improve readability.

Claim 5 is cancelled without prejudice.

Claims 7-14 are added. Support for new Claims 7-14 is found in the Specification and Claims, as originally filed. Specific support is found as follows.

New Claims	Support
7	page 3, 5 lines from bottom of page
8	paragraph bridging pages 3-4
9	page 9, Synthetic Example 1
10	page 10, Synthetic Example 2
11	page 10, Synthetic Example 3
12	page 11, Synthetic Example 4
13	page 4, line 6
14	page 4, line 8

It is believed that no new matter will be added upon entry of the amendment.

Upon entry of the amendment Claims 1-4, and 6-14 will be active.